COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS

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Cooperating.

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THE AUTOMOBILE TOUR

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What it is.

An automobile tour in extension work is a series of field meetings on farms and in homes where numbers of visitors can see and study successful demonstrations. It is the application and use of a modern vehicle to the development of a great idea. Automobile tours are used also by farm clubs and associations to visit neighboring and distant sections to learn about new crops, better live stock, improved methods and progressive developments along various lines of agriculture and home economics.

How it came about.

In the first years of the demonstration work the agent followed the practice of notifying the neighbors of his monthly visits to the farmers where demonstration fields were located. The county agent had a mailing list of cooperators who were doing the same kind of work as the demonstrators. It was impossible for him to visit them all so he had them meet him at certain places. There they discussed what had been done and the county agent outlined the next step. If, in the course of the year's work, a cooperator had done better work than the demonstrator he was transferred to the list of demonstrators and the next field meeting was held at his place. Frequently the agent carried an editor, a banker, a merchant or a farmer with him on his rounds. This naturally caused others to want to make observations and the tour resulted.

How it is planned.

The automobile tour expands the whole program and makes it possible to have many visitors. The tour calls for more planning, system and organization. It is necessary to have it worked out well in advance of the time when it is to be held. It is a good idea for agents who are concerned, and their advisory committees, to give careful consideration to the whole situation several weeks in advance and to select the demonstrations to be visited. While it may not be possible to visit all of the object lessons even along the line of travel, it is possible to select those which are most important. It is advisable, too, to discuss other demonstrations in the vicinity and to have the demonstrators tell of the strong points of their success.

How it is worked out.

The agents and one or two leading committeemen should go over the itinerary a day or two in advance of the crowd in order to see that everything is

properly worked out, and also to ascertain just how long it takes to make the schedule with its various stops. If the schedule has been generally published it is possible for a busy man to join the party anywhere.

The purpose.

The purpose of the tour is to give merited recognition to the people who have been doing good work for a long time and to have them influence, instruct and inspire others. Incidentally, of course, the agents and specialists will get in some helpful instructions. They will give direction and guidance to the movement, but the psychological effect is far more advantageous where the farmers and members of their families take the initiative in mass instruction and inspiration. Every normal person rejoices in the esteem of his fellows. The influence is more potent when it comes from neighbors and friends. It is the impelling and compelling effect of mass opinion. It carries him along with buoyancy and power. It makes other men want to do better in order to receive like commendation. It is a wise agent who works upon this principle of mass psychology rather than to spend time entirely upon ordinary methods of group instruction. Thus the community approves the successful achievements of its own members when it might be disposed to be critical of the abstract teaching of the agents and specialists.

The various types of tours.

Thus far several types of tours have been developed in this country. Generally speaking they are local, county, commodity, agent's and college or station tours.

Local tours.

A local tour usually arises from a desire on the part of many people to visit one farm or home where the work has attracted much interest and a lot of attention. For instance, a farmer has been conducting demonstrations for a series of years in soil improvement until his whole farm has become a demonstration, and the people get anxious to study the system which he has been following. The same idea applies to home improvement where the work has progressed from a small garden demonstration through more vegetable work, fruit, poultry, the dairy, the kitchen, household equipment, the house itself, to the beautification of farm grounds. Pilgrimages to such demonstrations have become so popular in some places that visitors often come back from long distances, even from other counties. The tour, itself, is not local but the interest centers in the locality where the fine object lessons are found. Groups of visitors to a center of interest always find things of value en route and usually several stops are made. The township tour is a larger local affair. It takes in several points of interest. One of the most effective of local tours is the kitchen tour where a small number of women visit only a few homes and make intensive studies.

County tours.

The county tour is usually a day's trip to 10 or 15 demonstrations well distributed throughout the whole territory. Perhaps 8 or 10 is better than a

properly carried out, and also to everyone, not only those who have to take part in conducting the various steps. If the schemes have been properly prepared, it is possible for a busy man to join the party anywhere.

The purpose of the tour is to give members recreation in the people who have been doing good work for a long time and to show them including, instead, an inquiry course. Incidentally, of course, the minute and systematic visit is not in some be local inspection. They will give direction and guidance to the movement, but the psychological effect is far more advantageous when the members see members of their fellows take the initiative in some inspection and inquiry. Every normal person receives in the course of his lifetime, the influence is more powerful when it comes from neighbors and friends. It is the type filling and responsible object of some opinion. It carries along with authority and power. It enters other men and women, either in order to receive like stimulation. It is a wave again was carried upon this principle of some personality rather than to appeal this authority, upon ordinary opinions of people inspection. Also the community approaches the educational institutions or its organization and, it shall be learned in political of the adequate training of the experts and specialists.

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A local tour usually arises from a desire on the part of some people to visit one town or more where the work has attracted much interest and a lot of attention. For instance, a farmer has been demonstration, for instance the form or a farm in will improvements until his work has been a demonstration. And the people get anxious to study the farm which he has done for them. The same then applies to some improvement where the work has been carried from a small farmer demonstration through more vegetable crop, dairy, the dairy, the nature, poultry-raising, the house itself, it is demonstration of farm grounds. Figures to each are particular are taken on particular in some places that visitors from some long distance, even from other countries. The tour, itself, is not local, all the interest centres in the locality where the visitors have come from. Groups of visitors to a centre of interest always find that the visit is very helpful and very several stops are made. The township tour is a larger local visit, it covers several points of interest. Usually the most attractive of local tours is the kitchen tour where a small number of women visit many a few homes and meet interesting visitors.

The county tour is usually a day's trip to 10 or 12 demonstration and attractive centres throughout the whole territory. Perhaps for 12 is better to a

larger number. In many county tours the practices of having the club members bring some of their chickens, pigs, calves or exhibits of corn, preserves and other products to the stopping places has increased the possibilities of the occasion. Judging by the reports of the agents the county tour is the most popular and the most effective. In some cases, the county tour lasts two or three days. The study is more intensive and the visitors get a better understanding of the progress of work as it is being developed. The discussions become more intelligent and vital.

Commodity tours.

The commodity tour is one where the entire attention of the whole day or several days is focused upon one crop or other phase of work. Some of the most conspicuous ones are alfalfa, soybeans, poultry, potatoes, fruit and live stock. The commodity tour is not usually restricted by geographical lines. It may be local, county, inter-county and even inter-State. Some of them are conducted under the auspices of improvement associations and various crop growers' clubs. While a trip may specialize upon one thing, there is much incidental observation and instruction along other lines.

Agent's tours.

In some sections of the country all of the agents in a given district have annual or semi-annual conferences. One day of the conference is devoted to a tour in the county where the meeting is to be held. The county agent and his cooperating farmers put on the tour and the visiting agents are guests. This gives the demonstration a double effect. It stimulates the people in the county and gives the visiting agents the opportunity to see how the work is done in other counties. Sometimes several agents will gather in one county for the tour only. The conference is incidental and secondary. Cooperating farmers and business men often join these itineraries and also take part in the deliberations.

College or station tours.

The college or station tour is an annual visitation to the college or station by the people from all parts of the State. This, of course, amounts to many small tours coming together at central headquarters. It means much to the institution as well as to the work in the various counties. On this occasion the institution is the host and has the responsibility for the entertainment and instruction. Upon such occasions the visitors are divided into groups so that each one may learn what he or she most needs. They observe the progress and results of the college and experiment station work.

Popularity of tours.

The number of tours of different types seems to be gradually increasing. In many sections they are becoming annual affairs. In the State of Nevada alone there were 14 tours in 1922. One thousand, eight hundred forty-two people made trips and 23,745 met them at the stopping places. This is true, especially with reference to institutional visits and the commodity association

trips. In some States, interest has been allowed to sag in the local and county tours, and is revived later. While the number of tours may decrease in some States, there is an increase in others, so that altogether they seem to make progress somewhat in proportion to the success of the work of the county agents, both men and women.

The tendency.

There is a tendency to drop the general tour, which contemplates the presence of men, women, boys and girls, and to give more special attention to the farm tour by men and boys and the home tour by women and girls. In fact, the tendency to specialization goes even further and takes up a very limited amount of farm or home observations upon a single trip. This is well, because it is not desirable to have the women and girls take the long walks over the big demonstration fields, orchards and barnyards. In some instances, these tours are so arranged that the women and girls may visit the home while the men and boys are looking at the crops and live stock.

Initiating the tour.

The responsibility for initiating a tour depends upon the kind to be conducted. The county or home demonstration agent is primarily responsible for any kind within the county. They know better than anybody else whether demonstrations have been conducted that have great teaching power. Of course the agents have the support and help of the executive committees and their county organizations. Suggestions often come in, however, from clubs, associations and individuals who see the opportunity for a successful occasion.

Cooperating parties.

In the commodity tour, the special associations through their officers and committees give more effective cooperation. They may have a large part in instigating the tour itself. Thus a Duroc, Holstein or Leghorn association, or an alfalfa, potato or apple club may start a trip to stimulate the thing they are growing. The specialists, in both cases, have a very important advisory status and they reinforce the work of the agents and local associations with supplementary suggestions and instructions.

How the tour is conducted.

Much of the pleasure and success of the occasion depends upon the route and itinerary. Under average conditions the stops should not be more than 10 miles apart. If 10 stops are made in a day this means 100 miles of travel, which is quite enough for any tour. It is necessary to allow at least 30 minutes for each stop and one hour for the noon-day luncheon. Thus it will be seen that 100 miles of travel and 10 stops will make a very good day's schedule. Shorter distances and smaller numbers of stops are preferable to an increase of distance and time. The more details that are worked out in advance, the more successful the tour will be. Banners and streamers should be provided so that the people in town and country will know what is going on and appreciate the importance of it. The first and the last automobiles should have distinctive markings and special duties. All automobiles should be numbered

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consecutively with large numbers. Number one should carry four or five guides with unique caps or other distinguishing features. A guide should get out at every fork or crossing of the road and act as a traffic cop. The rear automobile starts out without any passengers in it except the driver and picks up the guides as they are overtaken. It also serves as a clean-up machine and must not pass any automobile which has stopped for repairs. Each driver must understand that he is not to lose sight of the next car behind him. Thus the whole procession will be kept together throughout the whole schedule. An automobile tour is not an occasion for much public speaking. There is no opportunity for much formal instruction. What the person has done "speaks so loudly" that it is impossible to hear what he, or anybody else, has to say. It should be put down as fundamental that if any talking is done, the demonstrator should have the first chance. Let him tell it in his own way. Let the visitors ask him questions. If he cannot answer them all, let him call on his neighbors to help. The county agent and specialist will come in to fill out, round-up and balance up whatever information and instruction may be absolutely necessary. The tours are developing a new type of instructor. He is a kind of "catch-as-catch-can acrobat." He must adapt his remarks to the situation in hand. He will be able to drive home some points that he could not make in a formal lecture, in a classroom or on a platform. Many demonstators will be glad to put up markers, placards, charts and exhibit material in order to impress the object lessons. In fact, in some States they keep small placards posted on the demonstrations all the time. These should be supplemented, for this occasion, and they should be systematized at headquarters, so that it will be easier to grasp the situation and get the information. Whether the trip is arranged on a commodity basis, or whether several phases of work are to be emphasized on the trip, it goes without saying that the visitors will have opportunities to see many excellent farm and home enterprises and activities outside of the immediate demonstration program. They will learn a lot by absorption; at the same time where the tour becomes an established custom, there will always be a stimulus to encourage improvement and progress in order to receive the approval of friends and neighbors.

Who should go.

The committee in charge of arrangements should see that enough automobiles are provided to take care of all the people who should really go. It often happens that there are some people in moderate circumstances, who are doing excellent work under the supervision of the county agent, but do not have automobiles. Other farmers may come along with extra space; likewise bankers, merchants, editors and other business and professional men are anxious to make the trip and to have a part in it. They feel honored to carry a demonstrator or a club member whose record is outstanding and who is receiving the commendation of the public. It has been found that systematic organization along these lines reduces the costs and prevents them from falling heavily upon individuals or small groups. It is a good idea, however, to have a small contingent fee for each machine. This will pay for badges, markers, banners and other necessary expenses.

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Refreshments.

It has been found that, on all these tours, there are some progressive public-spirited demonstrators who wish to serve refreshments and carry out short programs in their homes and on the lawns. In fact, the home is thrown open to give the visitors an opportunity for rest and refreshments. This can not be done at every stop, but two or three occasions of this kind, in addition to the noon-day repast, should be allowed each day.

How party is selected.

The more closely the program of a tour is related to the development which has been carried forward throughout the year, or for several years, by the county agents and the demonstrators, the more successful it will be. It will also be more likely to become a permanent institution. It is easy enough to secure a lot of people who are glad to get a ride and a day's picnic. A systematic process of selection will get the people who are really interested and who will profit by the trip. The only method of selection which is logical and effective, is to have the people who are doing the work become the nucleus, and those who are cooperating become the increment. This is the reason why progressive business men should be invited.

How crowds should be handled.

In many instances, the crowds become so large that it is almost impossible to handle them all properly at one time and in one place. In such cases it is easy to divide the party into two or three groups, using the special numbers on the automobiles. The schedule then can be arranged so that the second party arrives at the farm just about the time that the first one is leaving. The same plan can be worked if there are several groups. Some of the commodity and association tours last for three or four days and even for a week. In such instances there is a tendency towards monotony and fatigue. It is a good idea to give variety by having the party assemble in some school auditorium, courthouse or any convenient place where they can be comfortably seated and have reviews and summaries of the observations made, as well as outlines of the ensuing schedules. This idea can be worked out to fine advantage where the crowd is large and where there is a great deal in the county to see. It is a very good plan to divide such a party into four sections early in the morning and have them go out into different directions. They all return to the central point early in the afternoon and the spokesman for the different groups tell what they have seen.

Follow-up.

The county agents and their helpers will lose a great opportunity for doing good unless they follow up an automobile tour and take advantage of the sentiment which has been developed. Many people will be ready to undertake demonstrations immediately following the interest and enthusiasm of the trip. They will be ready to start in and do good work for a year in order that they may get such public commendation and approval as has been awarded to their more enterprising neighbors. Reporters and editors will do their part in the

Entertainment.

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Why crowds should be limited.

In many instances, the crowds become so large that it is almost impossible to manage them all properly at one time and in one place. In such cases it is wise to divide the party into two or three groups, using the special interests in the automobiles. The schedule then can be arranged so that the second party arrives at the farm just about the time that the first one is leaving. The same plan can be worked if there are several groups. Some of the democracy and association there is lost for turns of four days and even for a week. In such instances there is a tendency towards monotony and fatigue. It is a good idea to give variety by having the party assemble in some school district, courthouse or any convenient place where they can be comfortably seated and have reviews and summaries of the observations made, as well as outlines of the coming activities. This idea can be worked out in the advantage where the crowd is large and where there is a great deal in the county to see. It is a very good plan to divide such a party into some sections early in the morning and have them go out into different directions. Any one can be at the central point early in the afternoon and the spectacle for the day is at groups that what they have seen.

Kitchens.

The county agents and their helpers will have a great responsibility for this and unless they follow up an autocratic hand in this arrangement of the equipment which has been available. Many people will be really to blame for organizations immediately following the interest and enthusiasm of the crowd. This will be really to state in but so good work for a year to come. Many may get much public commendation and approval in a few months to learn are participating motorists. Interest and activity will be the result in the

follow-up work. They will have already done a lot of advance work announcing the tour, and will be only too glad to continue their publicity. Bankers, business men and women generally will have renewed interest and zest because they will know more about what is going on among their constituents. The extension force should certainly use such sentiment among business men. In many places, where most successful county tours have been held, the town and country people unite in a banquet in the evening. This further develops the good feeling existing between country and town people and clinches the results of the tour.